

Enjoy Fireworks Safely

Fireworks are not toys, they are devices designed to reach high temperatures, to burn and spark, and to explode and launch. They are unpredictable by nature and dangerous for nonprofessional users.

Dr. Gary Smith, Director of the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Columbus Children's Research Institute in Ohio conducted a 22-year study of fireworks injuries treated in emergency rooms. What he found may help you understand the risk:

- * 67 percent of sparkler-related injuries were among children 5 years or younger
- * 70 percent of patients treated for all fireworks injuries were male
- * Adult supervision was present in 54 percent of the cases
- * The eyes were injured in nearly one-third of the cases
- * The average age of patients was eight and ½ years

Be aware fireworks safety is not a supervision issue. A fireworks injury can happen in the blink of an eye, whether or not a parent is standing by with a bucket of water. During the holiday, keep in mind that the safest amateur use of fireworks is none at all.

If you do take the risk of having your own fireworks display, please follow these steps to celebrate safely:

- ✓ Read and follow all warnings and instructions
- ✓ NEVER allow children to play with or ignite fireworks
- ✓ Ensure others are out of range before lighting fireworks
- ✓ Only light fireworks on a smooth, flat surface away from your house and other flammable materials
- ✓ Keep a bucket of water or water hose handy in case of malfunction or fire: if your fireworks fizzle out or don't go off, consider them duds, and douse them with water NEVER relight a dud!
- ✓ Brace the fireworks so they don't tip over (concrete blocks work well)
- ✓ Keep other fireworks away from the area you're lighting to prevent accidental ignition
- ✓ Always use eye protection
- ✓ Alcohol and fireworks do not mix. Use a designated shooter
- ✓ Never have any part of your body over the fireworks you are lighting
- ✓ Light the fuse and back away quickly